

MEMORIAL FOR DC WAR DEAD  
21 MAY 2006

THANK YOU CHAIRMAN KOUYEAS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO HONOR FELLOW RESIDENTS WHO HAVE SERVED OUR NATION AND MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE FOR FREEDOM. I OFFER A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO MR KOUYEAS AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE WHO FAITHFULLY ARRANGE THIS ANNUAL MEMORIAL OBSERVANCE TO THE HEROIC DEAD FROM THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. WHILE WE FOCUS ON THIS WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL, WE PAY TRIBUTE TO ALL RESIDENTS WHO HAVE SERVED IN EVERY MAJOR CONFLICT IN OUR HISTORY.

TODAY, ONCE AGAIN WE ARE A NATION AT WAR. AMONG THE CASUALTIES OF THIS WAR IS A DC NATIONAL GUARDSMAN, AND DC RESIDENT, SPC DARRYL DENT, AGE 21, KILLED IN ACTION, NORTHWEST OF BAGHDAD ON AUGUST 26, 2003. TWO OTHER DC RESIDENTS HAVE ALSO PERISHED IN IRAQ; MARINE CORPS LANCE CPL GREGORY E. MACDONALD, 29, KILLED JUNE 25, 2003, AND MARINE CORPS LT COL KEVIN M. SHEA, 38, KILLED SEPTEMBER 14, 2004. WE HONOR THEIR MEMORY AND THE VALUES FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT.

TODAY, I PLAN TO FOCUS MY REMARKS ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD AS A WAY TO HONOR THE SERVICE OF ALL SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, MARINES, AND MEMBERS OF THE COAST GUARD. FOR AS YOU WILL SEE, THE TRAITS EMBODIED BY

THOSE DC RESIDENTS WHO SERVED IN WWI AND ARE HONORED HERE,  
ARE THE HERITAGE OF MY COMMAND.

I BEGIN WITH A TRIBUTE TO THE AMERICAN LEGION, AN ORGANIZATION WITH A NOBLE VISION "FOR GOD AND COUNTRY" AND WHO AFFECT SO MANY LIVES THROUGH A COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO DEFEND FREEDOM. BOTH AS A BOY SCOUT AND AS A BASEBALL PLAYER, THE AMERICAN LEGION HELPED KEEP ME ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW AS A TEENAGER AND THEY CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE MY LIFE AS A MEMBER OF THE MILITARY. ALL OVER THE WORLD THIS GREAT ORGANIZATION FOSTERS THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, AMERICAN VALUES, COMMUNITY, AND SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY. SINCE BEING CHARTERED IN 1919, THEY HAVE INFLUENCED EVERY MAJOR PIECE OF VETERANS' LEGISLATION, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE PROGRAM THIS COMMITTEE OWES ITS SUCCESS TO THE LEGION AND THE LEGION'S AUXILIARY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION AND SUPPORT.

I ATTRIBUTE MANY OF THE FACTS REGARDING THIS MEMORIAL TO THE RESEARCH OF MARK DAVID RICHARDS, A LOCAL RESIDENT AND SOCIOLOGIST WHO WROTE AN ARTICLE ENTITLED " DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SERVICE IN WORLD WAR ONE AND THE DC WORLD WAR MEMORIAL," *MAY 26, 2002*.

THIS IS THE ONLY MONUMENT ON THE MALL FOR WHICH WASHINGTON, DC RESIDENTS RAISED THE MONEY TO BUILD. IT WAS COMPLETED IN 1931 AND DEDICATED AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK ON THE 11 DAY OF THE 11TH MONTH ON THE 13TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE DAY. IT WAS THE FIRST MEMORIAL ON THE MALL TO LIST WOMEN AND AFRICAN AMERICANS WITH WHITE MEN. THUS, IT IS INCLUDED AS A SITE ON THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL WHERE ON THEIR WEB PAGE IT IS RECORDED THAT "HENRY CHAPMAN GILBERT, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN, WAS THE FIRST PERSON FROM WASHINGTON TO ENLIST IN THE ARMED FORCES."

THE WASHINGTON STAR ON NOVEMBER 9, 1931, PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL TITLED, "THE WAR MEMORIAL." I QUOTE IN PART:

".....MORE THAN ANY OF THE SPLENDID MONUMENTS IN THIS CITY OF MONUMENTS, ITS ERECTION REPRESENTS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WASHINGTONIANS. CARVED IN THE SOLID STONE OF ITS BASE ARE THE HONORED NAMES OF THOSE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THIS CITY WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE WAR. ENCLOSED [SIC] IN THE FIRM FOUNDATIONS, SEALED AGAINST THE RAVAGES OF AGE AND DECAY, ARE THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO ANSWERED THE CALL OF DUTY SOUNDED BY THE WAR. AND THE COMPLETED WORK ITSELF, STANDING IN A GROVE OF FRIENDLY TREES IN WEST POTOMAC PARK IS TESTIMONY OF THE SUCCESS OF THE MEMBERS OF OUR WASHINGTON COMMUNITY WHO LABORED TO BUILD THIS MEMORIAL....."

THE MEMORIAL WAS LISTED IN 2003 BY THE DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE AS ONE OF DC'S MOST ENDANGERED PLACES DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT THE HISTORY HAD BEEN FORGOTTEN. UNTIL RECENTLY, IT SEEMED UNCLEAR WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE STRUCTURE—THE LOCAL D.C. GOVERNMENT OR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS) FELT THEY HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GROUNDS BUT NOT THE STRUCTURE. A NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST EXAMINED THE RECORDS AND DETERMINED THAT THE MEMORIAL IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARK SERVICE. THIS SHOULD FACILITATE PLANS FOR RESTORATION. I BELIEVE ITS SIGNIFICANCE AS A MEMORIAL FAR EXCEEDS THE ORIGINAL INTENT.

AMONG THE MANY UNITS IN WHICH LOCAL RESIDENTS SERVED DURING WW I WAS THE 372ND INFANTRY REGIMENT TO WHICH THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD WAS ASSIGNED. AS WE SPEAK MEMBERS OF THE 372ND MILITARY POLICE BATTALION HEADQUARTERS, DC NATIONAL GUARD, ARE STATIONED IN BAGHDAD. //THEY NOT ONLY CAN TRACE THEIR HERITAGE BACK TO THE 372ND INFANTRY BUT TO THE FIRST LEGION OF THE COLOMBIAN BRIGADE FORMED BY THE US CONGRESS IN 1802 TO DEFEND THE CAPITAL. PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON APPOINTED GENERAL JOHN MASON AS THE FIRST COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE DC MILITIA. IN HIS OUTGOING SPEECH GENERAL MASON LISTED THE DUAL ROLE OF THE MILITIA AS BOTH A DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL DEFENSE FORCE FOR THE NATION,

RELEVANT TODAY AS WE FACE A DETERMINED ENEMY IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM.

THE LINEAGE OF THE 372ND AND UNITS FROM THE DC NATIONAL GUARD HAVE FOUGHT IN EVERY MAJOR CONFLICT IN OUR HISTORY. A FEW NOTABLE FACTS: 1ST LIEUTENANT FRANCIS SCOTT KEY A QUARTERMASTER IN A DC MILITIA FIELD COMPANY WAS ON A MISSION FOR THE PRESIDENT WHEN HE WROTE THE WORDS TO THE SONG THAT WAS BECAME, IN MARCH OF 1931, OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM. JOHN PHILLIP SOUSA, AT AGE 77, RETURNED TO WASHINGTON TO LEAD THE MARINE CORPS BAND AND PLAYED THE NEW ANTHEM AT THE DEDICATION OF THIS MEMORIAL.

ON 10 APRIL 1861, TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ATTACK ON FT SUMTER, PRESIDENT LINCOLN ORDERED THE MOBILIZATION OF THE DC MILITIA TO DEFEND THE CAPITAL. THE DC MILITIA IS CREDITED WITH PROVIDING THE FIRST MAN, COMPANY, AND REGIMENT TO BE MOBILIZED FOR THE CIVIL WAR.

THE 372ND REGIMENT OF INFANTRY, UNITED STATES ARMY, WAS A BLACK REGIMENT COMPOSED OF THE FIRST SEPARATE BATTALION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PLUS UNITS FROM OHIO, MASSACHUSETTS, CONNECTICUT, MARYLAND AND 250 DRAFTED MEN MAINLY FROM MICHIGAN AND WISCONSIN --- ALL THESE BEING BLACK NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS.

EMMETT J. SCOTT, SPECIAL ADJUTANT TO SECRETARY OF WAR, IN 1919

WROTE AN OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO IN THE  
WORLD WAR. THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM THE CHAPTER ON THE  
372ND.

I QUOTE - IN THE 372ND INFANTRY WAS THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD, WHO'S HEROES, WERE  
PREVENTED BY THE ARMISTICE FROM WINNING ADDED GLORY. IT WOULD  
HAVE FALLEN TO ITS LOT TO HAVE THE HONOR OF BEING THE VANGUARD  
OF THE FRENCH ARMY OF OCCUPATION. OF THE NEARLY 600 DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA COLORED MEN WHO WERE WITH THE 372ND, AT LEAST 200  
WERE WOUNDED MORE OR LESS SERIOUSLY, AND ABOUT 33 WERE  
KILLED; PROBABLY THE FIRST TO FALL WITH A FATAL WOUND WAS  
PRIVATE KENNETH LEWIS HAVING BEEN KILLED AT HIS POST BY HAND  
GRENADES. HE TOOK FROM THE GERMANS A MACHINE GUN WHILE IT  
WAS IN ACTION ON BUSSY FARM IN THE CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MEN PROCLAIMED SERGEANT IRA PAYNE AS  
THE HERO OF HEROES AMONG THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FIGHTERS. HE  
WEARS THE CROIX DE GUERRE AND "ISN'T AFRAID OF THE DEVIL  
HIMSELF," ACCORDING TO THE MEN OF HIS COMPANY.

SERGEANT PAYNE SPEAKS MODESTLY OF HIS EXPLOITS. HE SAYS:

"DURING THE FIGHTING AT SECHAULT THE GERMANS WERE PICKING OFF  
THE MEN IN MY PLATOON FROM BEHIND A BUSH. THE GERMANS HAD

SEVERAL MACHINE GUNS BEHIND THAT BUSH AND KEPT UP A DEADLY FIRE IN SPITE OF OUR RIFLE FIRE DIRECTED AT THE BUSH. WE DID OUR BEST TO STOP THOSE MACHINE GUNS, BUT THE GERMAN AIM BECAME SO ACCURATE THAT THEY WERE PICKING OFF FIVE OF MY MEN EVERY MINUTE. WE COULDN'T STAND FOR THAT, SO I DECIDED I WOULD GET THAT LITTLE MACHINE GUN NEST MYSELF AND I WENT AFTER IT. I LEFT OUR COMPANY, DETOURED, AND BY A PIECE OF LUCK GOT BEHIND THE BUSH. I GOT MY RIFLE INTO ACTION AND 'KNOCKED OFF' TWO OF THOSE GERMAN MACHINE GUNNERS. THAT ENDED IT. THE OTHER GERMANS COULDN'T STAND SO MUCH EXCITEMENT. THE BOCHES SURRENDERED, AND I TOOK THEM INTO OUR TRENCHES AS PRISONERS."

ANOTHER HERO IS BENJAMIN BUTLER, A PRIVATE, AWARDED THE CROIX DE GUERRE. HIS CITATION READS: "FOR DISPLAYING GALLANTRY AND BRAVERY AND DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF IN CARRYING OUT ORDERS DURING THE ATTACK ON SECHAULT ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1918, UNDER HEAVY BOMBARDMENT AND MACHINE GUN FIRE." BUTLER SAID: "I DID VERY LITTLE. DURING THIS FIGHT WITH SEVERAL OTHERS, I CARRIED DISPATCHES TO THE FIRST LINE TRENCHES FROM HEADQUARTERS. THEY DECORATED ME, I SUPPOSE, BECAUSE I WAS THE ONLY ONE LUCKY ENOUGH TO ESCAPE BEING KNOCKED OFF."

PRIVATE CHARLES E. CROSS WAS AWARDED THE CROIX DE GUERRE FOR "HIS SPEED AND RELIABILITY IN CARRYING ORDERS TO PLATOONS IN. THE

FIRST LINE UNDER THE ENEMY'S BOMBARDMENT ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1918."

"IN SOME CASES," CROSS SAID, "I HAD TO CREEP ACROSS NO-MAN'S-LAND, AND A GREATER PART OF THE TIME I WAS EXPOSED TO ENEMY FIRE."

FIRST SERGEANT JOHN A. JOHNSON WAS TERMED IN HIS CITATION AND AWARD OF THE CROIX DE GUERRE " A HEROIC SOLDIER." "NEAR SECHAULT, DURING THE TIME THE DISTRICT MEN WERE MAKING A BIG EFFORT TO CAPTURE THE TOWN, I WAS PUT IN THE FRONT LINE NOT FIFTY FEET AWAY FROM THE ENEMY," JOHNSON REPORTS. "A GREATER PART OF THE TIME I WAS EXPOSED TO MACHINE-GUN FIRE. I SUPPOSE I GOT MY MEDAL JUST BECAUSE I STUCK WITH MY MEN. QUITE A FEW DISTRICT BOYS WERE BUMPED OFF AT THIS POINT."

PRIVATE WILLIAM H. BRAXTON, A MEMBER OF THE MACHINE GUN COMPANY OF THE REGIMENT, RECEIVED THE CROIX DE GUERRE FOR DISPLAYING "ZEALOUS BRAVERY." "AN ENEMY PARTY," HIS CITATION READS, "HAVING FILTERED THROUGH HIS PLATOON AND ATTACKED SAME IN REAR, PRIVATE BRAXTON DISPLAYED MARKED GALLANTRY IN OPENING FIRE ON THE ENEMY AND KILLING ONE AND WOUNDING SEVERAL OTHERS, FINALLY DISPERSING THE ENTIRE PARTY." "THE MEN WHO STUCK BY ME WHEN DEATH STARED THEM IN THEIR FACES, DESERVE JUST AS MUCH CREDIT AS I," BRAXTON SAID. "I WAS ONLY TEMPORARY LEADER OF THE MEN.



IN ALL 19 DC RESIDENTS OF THE 1ST SEPARATE BATTALION, RECEIVED INDIVIDUAL AWARDS. (THE OFFICIAL LIST OF THE WASHINGTON MEN OF THE FIRST SEPARATE BATTALION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WHO WERE DECORATED FOLLOWS: FIRST SERGEANT JOHN A. JOHNSON, COMPANY B; FIRST SERGEANT IRA A. PAYNE, COMPANY A; SERGEANT JAMES A. MARSHALL, COMPANY B; SERGEANT NORMAN JONES, COMPANY B; SERGEANT HOMER CRABTREE, COMPANY B; SERGEANT NORMAN WINSMORE, COMPANY C; CORPORAL JOHN R. WHITE, COMPANY B; CORPORAL BENJAMIN BUTLER, COMPANY C; CORPORAL MARCH GRAHAM, COMPANY D; PRIVATE WARWICK ALEXANDER, COMPANY B; PRIVATE GEORGE H. BUDD, COMPANY B; PRIVATE THOMAS A. FREDERICK, COMPANY B; PRIVATE JOHN S. PARKS, COMPANY B; PRIVATE CHARLES H. MURPHY, COMPANY C; PRIVATE WILLIAM N. MATHEW, COMPANY D; PRIVATE ERNEST PAYNE, COMPANY D; PRIVATE JOSEPH MCKAMEY, COMPANY A; PRIVATE WILLIAM DICKERSON, COMPANY' A; SERGEANT MAJOR SAMUEL B. WEBSTER.) END QUOTE

FOR THE ACTIONS OF ALL BRAVE SOLDIERS WITHIN THE 372ND INFANTRY THE UNIT WAS AWARDED THE FRENCH CRIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM EMBROIDERED MEUSE-ARGONNE AND THE DC NATIONAL GUARD WAS CHOSEN TO CARRY THE LINEAGE FORWARD. AGAIN IN WORLD WAR II ON THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY COMPANY A, 372ND INFANTRY, EARNED ANOTHER CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM.

THIS UNIT AND ALL UNITS IN THE DC ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SERVED IN DESERT STORM ONE. THE 547TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, "YOU CALL, WE HAUL" LOGGED MORE MILES IN THE COMBAT THEATRE DURING OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD AND STORM THAN ANY OTHER ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, OR RESERVE ARMY UNIT. THE 372ND MP BATTALION PERFORMED ENEMY PRISONER OF WAR DUTY OFTEN IN MAKE-SHIFT FIELD DETENTION FACILITIES.

AND IN THE GLOBAL WAR OF TERRORISM, THE DC NATIONAL GUARD RESPONDED MORE RAPIDLY THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN ITS PROUD 200 YEAR OLD HISTORY. ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2001, WITHIN AN HOUR OF THE ATTACK ON THE PENTAGON, THE 121<sup>ST</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON LAUNCHED ARMED FIGHTERS TO PROTECT THE CAPITAL. USING A NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS, THE UNIT FLEW 60 STRAIGHT HOURS AND CONTROLLED ALL FIGHTER AIRCRAFT SUPPORTING THE DEFENSE OF THE CAPITAL.

TO ASSIST WITH THE EXODUS OF COMMUTERS THAT DAY IT WASN'T THE MARINES FROM 8TH AND I, OR THE OLD GUARD FROM FORT MEYERS, IT WAS ONCE AGAIN THE 372ND MILITARY POLICE BATTALION WHO LEFT THEIR CIVILIANS JOBS TO ASSIST THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT. A DC NATIONAL GUARD MILITARY POLICE TASK FORCE AUGMENTED BY OUR TROOP COMMAND PROVIDED KEY ASSET PROTECTION FOR THE CAPITOL BUILDING. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT ARMED TROOPS HAVE BEEN ON CAPITAL GROUNDS SINCE THE 1968

RIOTS. SINCE 9-11 THE FOUR MP COMPANYS IN THE BATTALION HAVE SERVED IN AFGHANISTAN, GUANTANEMO BAY, CUBA, FORTS DETRICH AND LEAVENWORTH, BOLLING AFB, AND THE PENTAGON.

THE DC AIR NATIONAL GUARD CONTINUED TO EXCEL. WITHIN A DAY OF THE ATTACK THE 201<sup>ST</sup> AIRLIFT SQUADRON FLEW TO LOCATIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES TO PICK UP STRANDED FIGHTER PILOTS RETURNING THEM TO SUPPORT COMBAT AIR PATROL MISSIONS THEY ALSO HELPED RETURN MANY STATE AND MILITARY LEADERS STRANDED ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

THE DC ARMY GUARD'S MOBILIZATION AUGMENTATION COMMAND WAS THE FIRST ARMY NATIONAL GUARD UNIT TO BE MOBILIZED TO SUPPORT COMMAND AND CONTROL FACILITIES IN THE REGION. IN 2003, THE MIGHTY 547TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY PERFORMED CONVOY DUTY IN THE SUNNI TRIANGLE. THEIR COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP COMMANDER TOLD ME HE WOULDN'T GO TO FALLUJAH UNLESS THE 547TH COULD TAKE HIM BECAUSE HE KNEW HE WOULD BE SAFE.

THE 113<sup>TH</sup> WING AND MEMBERS OF THE 231<sup>ST</sup> COMBAT COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON DEPLOYED IN JANUARY 2003 FOR MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ. NEARLY 300 MEMBERS OF THE 113<sup>TH</sup> WING DEPLOYED FOR COMBAT, WHILE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DC AIR NATIONAL GUARD SUPPORTED AIR DEFENSE OF THE CAPITAL.

TTO DATE, THE DC NATIONAL GUARD HAS EARNED 12 BRONZE STARS. ONE OF THESE WAS AWARDED TO LT YOLANDA LEE, A DC GUARD MEMBER WHO HAPPENS TO BE AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE, AND A GRADUATE OF BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SHE DEPLOYED AS AN INDIVIDUAL AUGMENTEE WITH BRAVO COMPANY, 50TH MAIN SUPPORT BATTALION IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AS A PLATOON LEADER COMMANDING OVER 71 SOLDIERS DURING THE PERIOD AUGUST 2004 TO NOVEMBER 2005. SHE PERSONALLY PARTICIPATED IN 50 CONVOYS AND WAS RECOGNIZED FOR HER LEADERSHIP FOLLOWING AN ATTACK BY A VEHICLE BORN IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVISE. SHE QUICKLY RESPONDED TO MANEUVER THE GUN TRUCKS TO RESCUE TRAPPED SOLDIERS AND SIMULTANEOUSLY CONDUCTED A SEARCH AND CORDON OPERATION DETAINING TWO IRAQI INSURGENTS. LT LEE WAS THE ONLY AFRICAN AMERICAN IN THIS MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD COMPANY. AS ONE OF TWO FEMALE OFFICERS IN THE BATTALION SHE HAD TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE AND RESPECT OF HER SOLDIERS. TO QUOTE LT LEE, "MY FOCUS FROM THE START WAS TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BEING A GOOD LEADER, AND BRINGING MY SOLDIERS HOME SAFELY."

IN ADDITION TO THIS FEDERAL COMBAT ROLE THE DC NATIONAL GUARD PROVIDES SUPPORT TO THE CITY DURING CIVIL DISTURBANCES, NATURAL DISASTERS, AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS. WE SUPPORT EVERY INAUGURATION AND STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS. WE, IN

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY GOVERNMENT, OPENED THE DOORS TO KATRINA VICTIMS AT THE SAME TIME WE WERE DEPLOYING SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN TO LOUISIANA TO HELP THAT COMMUNITY RECOVER.

WE ALSO SPONSOR SEVERAL YOUTH PROGRAMS TO HELP THE COMMUNITY DEAL WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL DROP OUT RATE, ABSENTEEISM, AND YOUTH CRIME. FOUR DAYS A WEEK, WE HOST AN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM USING A GRANT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE TO TEACH LIFE SKILLS RELATED TO DECISION-MAKING AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS. THE GOAL IS A BETTER CITIZEN WHO STAYS IN SCHOOL TO GRADUATION. WE ALSO WILL BEGIN A 5 AND 1/2 MONTH RESIDENT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 16 AND 18 IN ORDER TO OFFER A PLACE AWAY FROM THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD TO FOCUS ON LEARNING. THE GOAL IS TO PASS THE HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAM.

TODAY THE DC NATIONAL GUARD REMAINS A COMBAT READY FORCE READY ON A MINUTE'S NOTICE TO SUPPORT BOTH ITS FEDERAL AND STATE MISSION. IT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, FORGING A JOINT HEADQUARTERS TO COMBINE THE DC ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD PERSONNEL AND ASSETS TO BETTER SERVE OUR NATION AND COMMUNITY. AS WE SPEAK THE 121ST FIGHTER SQUADRON PREPARES TO DEPLOY TO SOUTHWEST ASIA IN SUPPORT OF IRAQI FREEDOM. WHILE CONTINUING TO SIT ALERT AT ANDREWS AFB TO DEFEND THE CAPITAL.

WHEN THE MEMORIAL COMMISSION ELECTED TO LIST BLACKS AND WOMEN WITH WHITES ON THIS MEMORIAL IT FORETOLD OF THE FORCE WE HAVE TODAY. OUR COMMAND IS PROUD OF ITS DIVERSE HERITAGE AND WE PROUDLY CARRY THE LINEAGE OF THE SEPARATE AFRICAN AMERICAN UNITS THAT SERVED WITHIN OUR COMMAND. TODAY'S 372ND IS STILL PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN AND CONTINUES TO EXCEL IN COMBAT. THIS MEMORIAL IS IMPORTANT FOR ITS TIES TO A COMMUNITY THAT APPRECIATES THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH THIS GREAT NATION WAS BUILT.

I CLOSE WITH A POEM BY JOHN CLAGETT PROCTOR, LLD, WHO WAS A HISTORIAN, POET, GENEALOGIST, AND WRITER WHO WAS BORN, LIVED, AND WROTE EXTENSIVELY ABOUT DC AT THAT TIME. MR. PROCTOR WROTE A NUMBER OF POEMS THAT HE READ AT MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS IN D.C. (FORMERLY KNOWN AS DECORATION DAY). HERE IS A POEM HE WROTE ABOUT DC SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR I, TITLED "OUR BOYS" (1918):

THERE'S A TIME FOR WHICH I YEARN, 'TIS OUR SOLDIER BOYS' RETURN  
AND THE DAY THAT THEY WILL MARCH IN GRAND REVIEW,  
AND I DREAM — I MEDITATE — AND I FIND IT HARD TO WAIT  
JUST TO SEE THEM MARCHING UP THE AVENUE.

O, BUT WON'T THAT BE A DAY! WON'T THAT BE THE GREATEST DAY,  
WHEN WE REALLY SEE THEM SWINGING INTO VIEW?

WHY, I WOULDN'T MISS THAT SIGHT IF I HAD TO STAND ALL NIGHT,  
JUST TO SEE OUR BOYS MARCH UP THE AVENUE.

WHY, OF ALL THE LADS THAT WENT — OF TWO MILLION THAT WERE SENT —  
NONE WAS BETTER — AND I KNOW IT — SO DO YOU — THAN OUR BOYS FROM  
WASHINGTON,  
WHOM WE PROUDLY CALL OUR SON, WHO WILL MARCH IN LINE ALONG THE AVENUE.

SOME LEFT HOME AND FIRESIDE — SOME A SWEETHEART — SOME A BRIDE —  
SOME A MOTHER GRAY, AS SWEET AS HONEY DEW; AND WHEN THEY BEGIN TO SHOUT  
HEAVEN'S ANGELS WILL TURN OUT — WHEN OUR D.C. BOYS MARCH UP THE AVENUE.

TIME HAS CHANGED IN BUT A YEAR — SOME HAVE LOST THEIR MOTHER DEAR;  
SOME WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME HEAR THEIR BABY COO,  
AND SOME WILL MISS THAT LAD WHO WAS ALL THE BOY THEY HAD —  
WHEN THOSE BOYS OF OURS MARCH UP THE AVENUE.

BUT WE'LL DRIVE AWAY THE TEARS, WHEN THE D.C. BOYS COME NEAR,  
WE WILL BID ALL CARES AND GRIEF A QUICK ADIEU, AND WE'LL YELL LIKE MANIACS  
'TILL WE DROP RIGHT IN OUR TRACKS — WHEN OUR D.C. BOYS MARCH UP THE AVENUE.

SUCH A WELCOME! SUCH A HAND! WILL DROWN OUT THE LOUDEST BAND —  
AND THE WHOLE UNITED STATES WILL HEAR IT, TOO; AND IF I MAKE NO MISTAKE  
THERE WILL BE A BIG EARTHQUAKE, WHEN OUR D.C. BOYS MARCH UP THE AVENUE.

THANK YOU.